



The MAS Survey on Livability
Supported by The Rockefeller Foundation
Conducted by the Marist Institute for Public Opinion
Thursday, October 18, 2012

Major Findings

The third annual MAS Survey on Livability is a broad-based engagement mechanism that invites a statistically representative sample of New Yorkers to share their feedback on key local issues about access to public amenities, safety, development, and a range of other indicators that measure the livability and economic, social and environmental resilience of their communities.

Administered in partnership with the Marist Institute for Public Opinion, results are presented at the MAS Summit for New York City with the policymakers, funders, community leaders and the local citizens who are interested in, and driving, infrastructure development, preservation and sustainability efforts, arts and cultural projects, and civic engagement in our great city.

Overall Satisfaction

New Yorkers are positive about the city as a whole, as well as their neighborhoods, but residents of some boroughs are less positive about both New York City and their communities.

- New Yorkers are satisfied with living in New York City (84% very satisfied or satisfied¹)
 - The intensity of satisfaction is significantly higher in Manhattan and Brooklyn than the other boroughs and among people living in households earning \$75k or more
- New Yorkers are satisfied with living in their neighborhoods (84% very satisfied or satisfied)
 - In general, people are satisfied but there are differences by borough and race (91% of Staten Island residents are satisfied, compared with 77% of Bronx residents (23% in the Bronx are dissatisfied); 20% African-American, and 23% Latino compared with 9% of Whites are dissatisfied.)

Priorities and Livability

New Yorkers have strong opinions—and not always achieving consensus—in how their city should set priorities for major investments and what makes their city livable.

- When asked what the biggest threats are to living happily in the city, New Yorkers top 4 items were, in order: employment opportunities (22%), safety (21%), housing (19%) and costs of goods and services (19%).
 - Employment concerns do not differ across the boroughs
 - Safety concerns residents in Staten Island (25%), Brooklyn (24%), and Queens (22%) similarly. Manhattan resident's concern is lowest (15%).
 - Housing options concerns are highest in Manhattan (30%) and Bronx (24%); significantly lower in Queens (12%) and Staten Island (7%)
 - Costs of goods and services are especially concerning for residents in Staten Island (30%) and Queens (25%)
 - Other threats to livability for NYC residents, as a whole, are the quality of public services (such as sanitation or transportation) (9%), and parks and open space (3%).
- When given the choice between having more parks and green space or housing, stores or businesses in their neighborhoods, New Yorkers favor parks and open spaces (34%) vs. 23% for more housing, 16% for new retail, and 23% for new or improved transportation
 - New Yorkers with household income of \$75k and higher were more likely to say the most important thing to them to have in their neighborhood was parks and open spaces
 - Latinos (36%) were more likely to say housing
 - Open spaces are most important to Staten Island and Brooklyn residents (44% and 43%, respectively)
 - Having more housing is most important to Bronx residents (30%)
 - New or improved transportation services are most important to Queens residents (33% vs Manhattan (16%))
- Creating a world class ground transportation hub (subways, trains, buses)
 - Overall 61% of New Yorkers think it's a top priority for such investments, while 27% felt it was important but not a top priority
- Developing world class airports to maintain NYC's reputation as a transportation hub
 - 38% felt it was important but not a top priority, whereas 37% felt it was a top priority, the remainder (25%) felt it was not a priority at all
- Being a city with major universities and high quality colleges
 - The majority (63%) of respondents felt this was a top priority, while 27% felt it was important but not a top priority, and 10% felt it wasn't a priority at all

- Willingness to deal with inconvenience now for major infrastructure improvements
 - On-going street construction
 - 65% willing vs 33% not willing
 - Relocated bus stop
 - 62% willing, 33% not willing
 - Men (65%) were more willing to be inconvenienced now for future improvements than were women (59%)
 - Street closures for improved transportation services
 - 62% willing vs 36% not willing
 - Subway station closure for construction
 - 57% willing vs 39% not willing

Neighborhood Attributes, Service and Amenities

Overall, New Yorkers are quite positive about a number of neighborhood attributes, services and amenities, but there were some disparities among the boroughs, and along racial and economic lines.

- Cleanliness
 - Overall, 79% agree (strongly agree or agree) ⁱⁱ that their neighborhood is clean (Staten Island is most positive (91% agree))
 - 27% of Bronx residents disagree (strongly disagree or disagree ⁱⁱⁱ) that their neighborhood is clean, showing no improvement over last year
- Good Place to Raise Children
 - 76% of New Yorkers think their neighborhood is a good place to raise children, led by Staten Island residents, 89%, whereas only 67% of Bronxites rated their neighborhoods as good places to raise children (Bronx is up from 63% last year, and 55% in 2010)
 - About one third (33%) of Bronx residents do not feel that their neighborhood is a good place to raise children
 - Respondents with higher incomes were more positive about their neighborhoods as a good place to raise children (84% of NY'ers in households earning \$75k or more vs. 73% of those earning less than \$75k)
- Safe to Walk
 - Overall, 87% agree that they feel safe walking in their neighborhood
 - 21% of Bronx residents (compared with 10% of Staten Island residents) say they do not feel safe walking in their neighborhoods
 - Income disparity—17% of people in households earning less than \$75k do not feel safe vs. only 4% of people earning more than \$75k
- Easy Access to Public Transportation Services

- 94% agree that their neighborhood has easy access to public transportation (Manhattan and Brooklyn led with 96% vs. Staten Island, 88%)
- Street Repair and Maintenance
 - New Yorkers are more divided on this; a majority (54%) rate street repair and maintenance in their neighborhoods as excellent or good
 - Majorities in Staten Island (54%) and Queens (52%) rate these services as fair or poor
- Quality of Shopping
 - Overall, 63% felt that the quality of shopping in their neighborhood is excellent or good
 - Bronx residents (41%) and Brooklynites (44%) rate the quality of shopping in their neighborhoods as fair or poor
- Quality of Grocery Stores and Markets
 - 71% of New Yorkers say they have excellent or good grocery stores and markets in their neighborhoods
 - Nearly one third of Queens residents say they have fair or poor grocery stores or markets in their neighborhoods
- Parks and Open Spaces
 - Overall, 61% of New Yorkers rate their parks and open spaces as excellent or good
 - In terms of intensity of feeling, Manhattanites (79%) and Staten Islanders (70%) rate their parks and open spaces as excellent or good
 - 46% of Queens residents, 41% Bronxites and 40% of Brooklyn residents rate their neighborhood parks and open spaces as fair or poor
 - More Latinos (47%) and African-Americans (41%) rate their parks and open spaces as fair or poor vs. Whites (30%)
 - Manhattanites lead the group in frequent visits with 42% using parks more than 30 times in the past 12 months; this compares with Staten Islanders 29%, Bronxites 23%, Brooklynites 21%, and Queens residents 26%
- Opportunities to See Live Theater, Concerts or Performances
 - A plurality of New Yorkers are dissatisfied with opportunities to see live theater, concerts or performances in their neighborhoods, with 47% rating it fair or poor, and 15% saying it's not available in their neighborhood
 - Many Manhattanites (61%) rate their variety as excellent or good, but residents in every other borough feel otherwise (e.g., only 27% of Bronx residents give positive ratings)
 - 63% reported not having attended a performance in their neighborhood in the last 12 months
 - For those who rated their neighborhoods as fair or poor for opportunities to see live theater, concerts or performances more than two thirds say that opportunities weren't

conveniently located (46%) or there weren't any such opportunities (21%) in their neighborhoods

- Place to Experience Culture, such as Museums and the Arts
 - Nearly half (48%) of New Yorkers are dissatisfied with their neighborhoods as a place to experience culture
 - 55% of Bronxites and 60% of Queens residents rate their neighborhoods fair or poor as a place to experience culture, while 65% of Manhattanites rate their neighborhoods as good or excellent places to experience the arts.
 - Overall, 58% reported not having attended a cultural event in their neighborhood in the last 12 months
 - For those who rated their neighborhoods as fair or poor places to experience the arts, more than 3 out of 4 say that those places weren't conveniently located (52%) or there weren't any such opportunities (24%)
- Rating of Libraries
 - Overall, the majority of New Yorkers (73%) rate highly the public libraries in their neighborhoods, up from last year's 64%
 - Nearly 8 out of 10 Manhattanites (77%) rate their libraries as excellent or good, compared with 69% in the Bronx and Brooklyn
 - 39% of New Yorker's have not visited their neighborhood library in the past 12 months (53% of Staten Island residents have not visited their local library during the same period).
 - For those who rated their libraries as fair or poor, convenience of location was the predominant reason for dissatisfaction (19%)

Attitudes toward Big Real Estate Development

While the majority (58%) of New Yorkers think large Real Estate Development in a neighborhood is a good idea because it creates jobs and new places to shop, about one third (32%) think it's a bad idea because it is disruptive and closes local stores.

- Maintaining Neighborhood Character
 - The majority of New Yorkers (67%) think that there is a good mix of older buildings and new development

Borough Bests

Overall, when asked to compare boroughs on a host of factors—friendliest, affordability, best for families—New Yorkers display their borough pride, with some interesting surprises.

- Best Place to Live?

- Manhattan wins with 28%, then Queens (25%) and Brooklyn (24%), Staten Island (9%), and the Bronx (8%)
- Most Diverse?
 - Manhattan wins with 34%, then Brooklyn (27%) and Queens (25%), the Bronx gets 7%, and Staten Island gets 1%
- Artistic?
 - Manhattan wins with 62%, followed by Brooklyn (23%)
- Best Value for the Money?
 - Queens leads again this year (25%), then Manhattan (24%) and Brooklyn (18%)
- Best place to start a new business or company?
 - Manhattan wins with 44%, followed by Brooklyn (21%), Queens (12%), Bronx (8%) and Staten Island (4%).

Who's the Most Optimistic?

New Yorkers continue to be optimistic about the future of New York, with an overall increase in the percentage of New Yorkers describing themselves as very optimistic or optimistic —81% (an increase of 5%). The optimism ratings have changed across the boroughs, with Queens having been the most optimistic last year, now falling to number 3.

- Most Optimistic Borough?
 - Manhattan (87%) Brooklyn (85%), Queens (80%), Bronx (75%), and Staten Island (69%)

Survey Methodology This survey of 1,324 New York City residents was conducted by the Marist Institute for Public Opinion from August 28th through August 31st, 2012. Residents 18 years of age and older were interviewed by telephone. Telephone numbers were randomly generated and selected based upon a list of telephone exchanges from throughout the city. The exchanges were selected to ensure that each borough was represented in proportion to its population.

The city sample was stratified by borough (approximately 200 interviews in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island; and, approximately 500 in the Bronx) to allow for borough level analysis. The larger sample in the Bronx will be used in a forthcoming analysis about the quality of life in the Bronx. The sample was balanced to U.S. Census parameters so that each borough reflects its proportion of the New York City adult population. To increase coverage, this landline sample was supplemented by respondents reached through random dialing of cell phone numbers. The two samples were then combined. Results for New York City residents are statistically significant within ± 2.7 percentage points. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations.

Acknowledgements

This Survey and analysis is supported by The Rockefeller Foundation. This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

The findings were presented at the 2012 MAS Summit for NYC on October 18, 2012.

For more information: MAS.org

Contact:

Anne Coates, Vice President, Strategy and Community Engagement

acoates@mas.org (212) 935-3960 x 1286

ⁱ For the purposes of these findings, unless otherwise noted, when it is noted that New Yorkers are “satisfied” that includes the two response categories of “very satisfied” and “satisfied.”

ⁱⁱ For the purposes of these findings, unless otherwise noted, when it is noted that New Yorkers “agree” that includes the two response categories of “strongly agree” and “agree.”

ⁱⁱⁱ For the purposes of these findings, unless otherwise noted, when it is noted that New Yorkers “disagree” that includes the two response categories of “strongly disagree” and “disagree.”